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Facial Yoga is becoming popular again

Talking Points

[Yoga Facials](#)

The ancient practice of Facial Yoga is gaining credence again. Vernetta Butler suggests some exercises. [Click Here](#)

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Yoga Facials

Facial Yoga has been around for a long time, and is becoming fashionable again, says [Vernetta Butler](#). Tone your facial firmness with these simple facial exercises that cost nothing but a few minutes of your time each day.

We spend hours working the muscles in the body to keep them toned and fit. So why not also apply this concept to our face?

There are about 16 major muscles, 14 bones and assorted arteries, veins and blood vessels helping your face do the things it does.

Muscles connect to both the skin and the bone, and form the 'cushion' on which the skin rests. If this cushion is flat or worn-out, the skin will not look its best and the skin will start to sag causing lines and wrinkles.



Like the muscles in our body, our facial muscles absorb and store a lot of stress and tension, which then constricts blood vessels, limiting the flow of blood and nutrients to your face.

What's more, the tension can cause headaches and spread down into our neck and shoulders.

Unless you relax those muscles, they get stiff and hard and look strained but like all exercises, they must be done regularly to achieve and maintain results.

Every good yoga class should end with relaxation, tensing and releasing all muscles including the ones in the face. On this basis we can go a lot further with facial exercises. Your face works hard everyday and it deserves a break and some pampering.

Below is a complete facial exercise programme, mostly derived from yoga exercises that relax tense muscles, release stress and improve circulation. You don't have to do the whole lot, of course - find the ones that work for you.

I often get asked if these exercises will cause baggy skin or lines. No, is the answer. Some plastic surgeons and beauty therapists promote and encourage the use of facial exercises, but most don't - why would they promote something that helps anti-ageing when you could pay them loads to 'fix the problem'?

Yoga Facial exercises have been around for a long time, but because there is no real financial gain, they are not well promoted.

Sequence One - Warm ups, massage and 'comfort' moves.

The Great Rub

Benefits: Releases stress and tension, particularly in the temples and jaw. Place the index and middle fingers of both hands in the middle of your forehead. Rub your forehead by making small circles with your fingers.

Move your fingers across your brow and to your temples, pausing there to give them a gentle massage. This is an area where we hold stress and tension that can often lead to headaches. Then move down from your temples to the hinge of your jaw, pausing to massage your jaw muscles. From there, move across your cheeks and up along the side of your nose to your forehead. Repeat.

Eye Palming

Very beneficial if you've had a long day staring at a computer screen or TV. Find a comfortable seated position, either on floor on a cushion or in a chair. Sit with your back straight. Begin with your eyes closed. Focus on your breath as it moves in and out of your nostrils. Cool air in, warm air out. Rub your palms together very fast until they feel warm. Then cup them over your closed eyes. Repeat.

Benefits: Soothes the optic nerve, eyes and area around the eyes. This can be done with warming the hands gently by a fire and placing them over the eyes.

Socket massage

Benefits: Relaxes the eyes and surrounding areas, and relieves stress and tension. Take your index and middle fingers of each hand and place them on either side of your nose just below the bridge. Rub your fingers up to the bridge of your nose and along your eyebrows. You'll feel a notch in your eye socket where the bone begins to turn downward. Rub the notch gently for a moment. Then follow the line of the socket rim down beneath the eye and back up along the side of your nose. Repeat 3-5 times.

Scrunches

Benefits: Increases circulation, relieving stress and tension. Scrunch your face real tight. Purse your lips, draw your cheeks in toward your nose, pull your eye brows down and bring the flesh of your chin up toward your mouth. Hold...and release. Repeat.

Cheek Pinches

Benefit: Improves circulation

Pinch your cheeks, by grabbing bits of flesh and giving them a squeeze.

Exercise Sequence Two - specific areas

A lot of these exercises will seem as though they are the same, well they are very similar but do work on slightly different areas and like any exercise, they take time and practise so don't be put off first time if you aren't sure what you're doing, just keep at it as all exercise is good.

Kissing Moves

1. Sit upright facing forward and purse your lips together. Lift your pursed lips towards your nose and keep there for 5 counts, relax and repeat 5 times.
2. Pucker your lips slightly and when in this puckered position, try with your mouth muscles to bring the corners of your mouth together as close as possible towards the middle. Keep lips in this position for 5 counts, relax and repeat 5 times.
3. Move your lips into a puckered kiss and while relaxing the kiss keep your lips closed and curl your lips into your mouth across your teeth like rolling your lips into your mouth. Hold this position for a count of 10 and repeat 5 times.
4. Sit relaxed with your lips hardly open and pucker your lips outwards. While your lips are in the outward position, move your puckered top lip towards your nose. Hold in this position for 10 counts and repeat 5 times.

Smiling Moves

1. Sit upright facing forward and keep your lips closed and teeth together. Smile as broadly as possible, without opening your lips, keep there for 5 counts and when relaxing start puckering your lips in a pointed kiss. Keep there for 5 counts and relax - repeat 10 times.
2. Clenched smile - Grit your teeth and open your lips as wide as they will go. Feel your lips, cheeks, chin and neck stretch to their limit. Hold...and release. Repeat.

Cheek Exercises

1. Sit upright facing forward with lips closed but relaxed. Pucker and pout your lips using the muscles in your cheeks. (Feel with your fingers that you are using your cheek muscles.) Keep puckered for a count of 10, relax and repeat 10 times.
2. Have a relaxed smile with your lips closed and then suck in your cheeks towards and on to your teeth. Hold this for 10 counts, relax and repeat 10 times.
3. Look in a mirror while doing this exercise. Pout your top lip, turning the corners of your lips upwards and move your cheek muscles towards your eyes. You should at this stage try to get your top lip touching your nose. Keep in this position for 10 counts, relax and repeat 5 times.

4. Look in a mirror while doing this exercise. Smile as widely as possible - while keeping your lips closed and your mouth corners turned up. Try to make your mouth corners touch your ears. Next wrinkle your nose and see your cheek muscles move upwards and feel these muscles work. Keep for 5 counts, relax and repeat 10 times.
5. Keep your teeth and lips closed and blow air under your top lip and keep it there for 10 counts, then move it to your left cheek, hold for 10, to your lower lip, hold for 10 and then to your right cheek while holding it for a count of 10. Repeat 5 times.

Eye Exercises

The skin around the eye, is the thinnest and most fragile skin found on the body, and wrinkles in this area cause great aging of the face, as the eyes are the central point where most people focus when talking to you. Baggy eyes can be helped with facial eye exercises.

1. Gently tone the muscles of the eyes by pressing two fingers on each side of your head, at the temples, while opening and closing your eyes rapidly. Repeat 5 times.
2. Sit upright with your eyes closed and relaxed. While keeping your eyes closed the whole time, first look down and then look up as far as possible. Repeat the facial exercise 10 times.
3. Sit upright with your eyes closed and relaxed. Keep your eyes closed while lifting your eyebrows and stretching your eyelids down as far as possible. Keep in this position for 5 counts, relax and repeat 5 times.
4. Sit upright with your eyes relaxed and open. Lift your eyebrows while closing your top eyelids until about halfway closed, then open your eyelids wide until the white of your eye shows over your iris.
5. Sit upright looking straight ahead with your eyes open. Look up then down, while keeping your head still. Repeat 10 times. Then look left and right - repeat 10 times.

Forehead Exercises

The area on the forehead, between the eyebrows, can easily become lined and full of wrinkles and for this facial exercises can be a great help.

1. Frown as much as possible and try to bring your eyebrows over your eyes while pulling the eyebrows toward one another. Then lift your eyebrows as far as possible while opening your eyes as far as possible. Repeat 5 times.
2. Lie on your bed facing the ceiling your head hanging over the edge. Lift your eyebrows as high as possible, with your eyes opening very wide. Relax and repeat 10 times.
3. Sit upright facing forward and while bringing your eyebrows down over your eyes, wrinkle your nose as far up as possible while flaring your nostrils. Keep for a count of 10, relax and repeat 5 times.

Neck / Throat Exercises

There's the old saying of if you want to know a persons age, look at their neck and throat!

These exercises will help relieve and prevent a double chin, loose skin on the neck and throat area and will also assist in toning these muscles. A double chin is not simply excess weight manifesting itself - but its also is the manifestation of loose skin and terrible muscle tone.

1. The Lion - A true yoga move that should be fun so please be sure to make it so, although its not probably best not to do this in the company of others as it does look strange! Take a deep breath. All at once, exhale forcefully, open your mouth wide, stick your tongue out as far as it will go, say "Aghhhhhhh," and open your eyes wide and look up. Repeat 3 times. Benefits: Relieves tension in the throat and face, stimulates the eyes and improves circulation.
2. A great exercise is to sit upright, tilt your head back looking at the ceiling while keeping your lips closed and then start a chewing movement. You will feel the muscles working in your neck and throat area - and will be truly amazed at the results. Repeat 20 times.
3. Sit upright, tilt your head back looking at the ceiling, while keeping your lips closed and relaxed. Start puckering your lips together in a kiss and stretch the kiss, as if you were trying to kiss the ceiling. Keep your lips puckered for 10 counts, then relax, bring your head back to its normal position and repeat 5 times.
4. Sit upright, tilt your head back looking at the ceiling, while keeping your lips closed and relaxed. Open your lips and stick your tongue out as if you were trying to touch your chin with the tip of your tongue. Keep your tongue out in this position for 10 counts, and then return your tongue and head to its normal position.
5. Sit upright, tilt your head back looking at the ceiling, while keeping your lips closed and relaxed. Next move your lower lip over your top lip as far as possible and keep it there for a count of 5. Relax and repeat 5 times.
6. Lie on your bed, with your head hanging down over the edge. Slowly bring your head up towards your torso and keep it there for 10 counts. Relax and lower your head towards the floor again - repeat 5 times.
7. Sit upright and face forward and while keeping your lips together, separate your teeth by dropping your jaw and then push your jaw forward, keep for a count of 10, bring back to starting position and repeat 5 times.

And that's it! Do these exercises regularly, and you'll notice a difference.

Vernette Butler is a yoga teacher, therapist and counsellor, based in Weybridge. See www.vernyoga.cd2.com, or email Vernette_thecounsellor@yahoo.co.uk